GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2024
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WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION
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Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of World Health Organisation's (WHO) latest standards in child growth vis-Ã -vis those in India;

(b) whether the Union Government proposes to adopt WHO norms;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the time by which it will be adopted; and

(d) the extent to which Integrated Child Development Scheme has been helpful in contributing to child growth in India?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY)

(a) WHO latest Child Growth Standards were launched in April 2006. These are based on important norms for child care, nutrition and health. To develop these standards a multi-centric study was carried out to collect primary growth data and related information from 8440 healthy breastfed infants and young children from diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultural settings from six countries namely Brazil, Ghana, India, Norway, Oman and United states.

The growth standards currently in use in the country, since late seventies, the NCHS (National Centre for Health Statistics) standards based on height and weight of formula fed children or children on mixed feeding from United States.

The New WHO Growth Standards are scientific, gender specific and for the first time describe "how children should grow". These charts show that all children across all regions can attain similar standard of height and weight and development with correct feeding practices, good health care and a healthy environment. A key characteristic of the new standard is that it establishes breastfeeding as the Qbiological norm' and the breastfed infant as the standard for measuring healthy growth. Further, a pooled sample form the six participating countries allows the development of a truly international standard which is in contrast t o the previous international reference based on study of children from a single country.

(b)&(c) The Ministry of Women & Child Development jointly with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organized a National Workshop on "Adoption of New WHO Child Growth Standards" on February 8-9 2007 in New Delhi to deliberate on the adoption of the New WHO Child Growth Standards. A consensus emerged in the Workshop in favour of adoption of these standards. However, a decision on adoption of these standards has not been taken as yet.

(d) Several evaluations have revealed that the Integrated Child Development Services has contributed significantly in promoting child growth in India. However, outcome varies widely across states as revealed by the findings of National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3) released recently.